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27 March 1959

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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27 March 1959

DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

USSR: Soviet leaders have made consistent efforts since November to reassure their population that no grave risk of war over Berlin exists, according to the American Embassy in Moscow. While there have been scattered articles in the Soviet press conveying the impression of hysteria and bellicosity in the United States, there has been no campaign charging the existence of an American "war psychosis." The American Embassy believes the Soviet public is now more concerned over a war threat than before Khrushchev's Berlin moves, but less than during the Suez and Taiwan Strait crises. There have been no rumors of hoarding, which were prevalent during the earlier crises.

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*Communist China - Ceylon: Communist China and Ceylon agreed on 26 March to establish air service between the two countries. The flights, probably from Canton to Colombo, in effect will be an extension of China's only other air route in the free world which connects Canton and Kunming with Rangoon. An air agreement with India has been under discussion for several years.

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Laos: [The Laotian prime minister has told the American ambassador that his government has decided to curtail drastically French military activities in Laos. The decision runs counter to French hopes to expand their influence there, in part by enlarging their training mission.]

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DAILY BRIEF

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III. THE WEST

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Cuba: Former Costa Rican President Figueres failed in his visit to Cuba to convince Fidel Castro that Castro's movement is supporting irresponsible Communist groups in its campaign against Caribbean dictatorships. This rift between Castro and the popular Figueres will bring about a loss of confidence in Castro in Cuba itself as well as among those hemisphere leaders who wish to bring about a change in the dictatorships. There is growing discontent in Cuba even among former Castro supporters, but as yet no organized opposition.

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IV. SIGNIFICANT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AND ESTIMATES

(Available during the preceding week)

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Chinese Communist Intentions and Probable Courses of Action in the Taiwan Strait Area. SNIE 100-4-59. 13 March 1959.

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The Berlin Crisis. SNIE 100-2/1-59. 17 March 1959.

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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Laos Reaffirms Decision to Eliminate French Military Role

[The Laotian Government on 24 March decided to reject France's recent offer to send 80 additional military instructors to Laos. The cabinet also decided to curtail the functions already exercised by the French mission and to insist on control of the French airfield and base at Seno. Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone informed the American ambassador that these decisions were part of the over-all objective of eliminating entirely the French military position in Laos. He said that only US representations over the past several months had prevented earlier action.]

[Phoui said that he would shortly send a formal letter requesting US military training assistance. He said he appreciated the need to avoid an unpleasant breach with the French and invited the American ambassador to help him make his notification to the French as "palatable as possible." Phoui gave a noncommittal reply to the ambassador's contention that it was essential for Laos and the US to retain French cooperation.] [REDACTED]

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III. THE WEST

Castro's Policies Isolating Cuba in Latin America

Fidel Castro's increasing tendency to blame the United States for Cuba's economic and political problems and to insist on a "neutralist" position in world affairs is widening the rift between Cuba and the liberal bloc in Latin America led by former Costa Rican President José Figueres and Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt. Castro strongly refuted Figueres' pro-US speech in Havana on 22 March, in which Figueres advised Cuba to follow a moderate approach to revolutionary reforms and to align itself with the West. This undoubtedly spelled failure for any attempt by Figueres to orient Castro toward the Figueres-Betancourt axis--particularly with respect to the "campaign against dictatorships."

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Castro's reply to Figueres, which was followed by another strong attack against Figueres' views by the Cuban official newspaper Revolucion, may also encourage internal opposition to the Castro government by emphasizing Cuba's isolation from the Latin American liberal bloc. Many commercial and business groups have already been alienated by Castro's economic policies, which seem directed against "vested interests" and US influence on Cuba's economy. There is also discontent within some political circles, although there is as yet no cohesive opposition to the government.

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